Volume 19 No. 7 November 2008

TRUTH ABOUT POWER IS SPOKEN HERE
WIP
WORKS IN PROGRESS

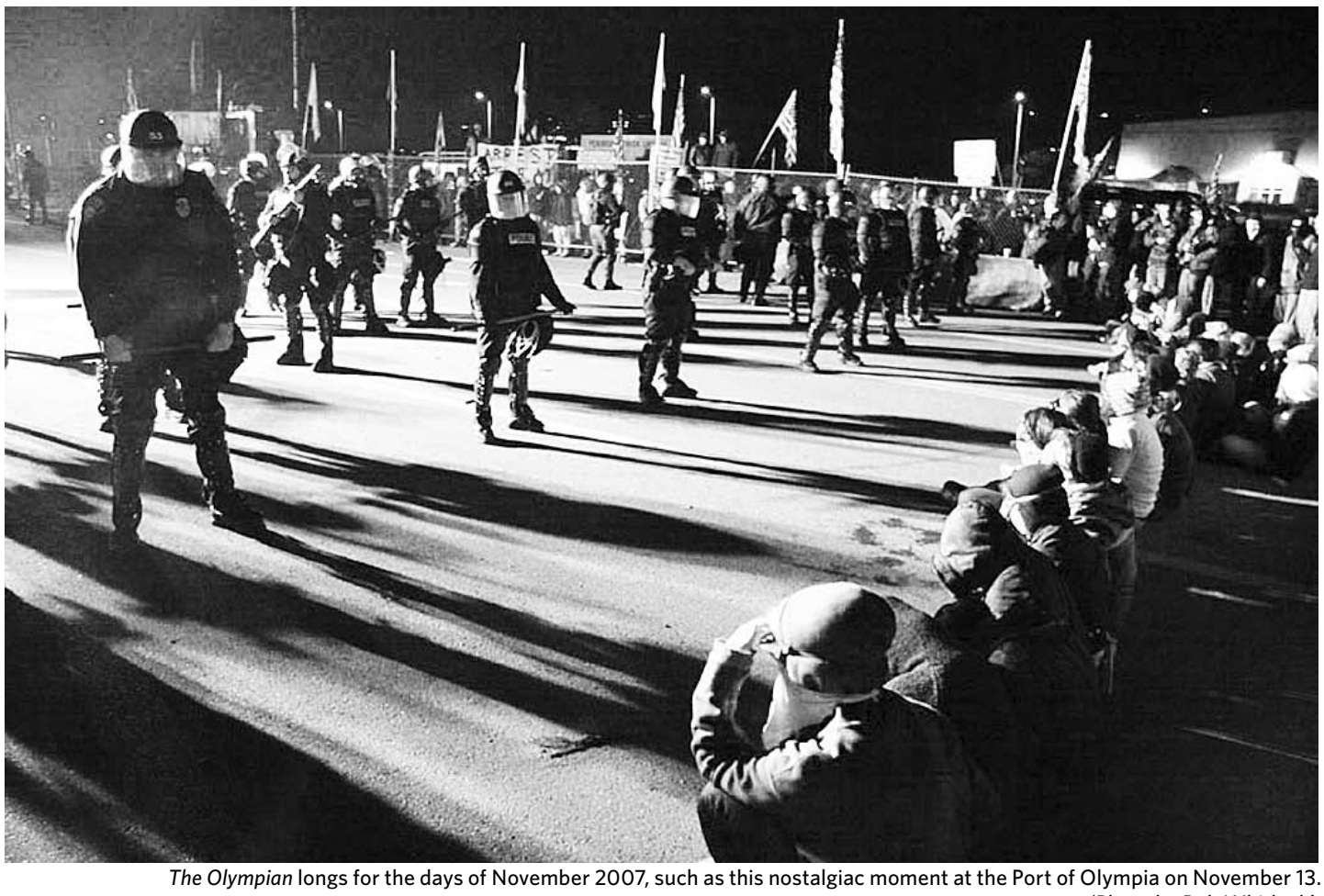
# WORKS IN PROGRESS

ESTABLISHED IN 1990 BY THE THURSTON COUNTY RAINBOW COALITION

# Port of Olympia 2007! Someone must pay!

## BUT IT'S *THE OLYMPIAN* THAT WANTS RESTITUTION

**by Phan Nguyen**



*The Olympian* longs for the days of November 2007, such as this nostalgiac moment at the Port of Olympia on November 13. (Photo by Rob Whitlock)

On Oct. 24, 2008, the *Olympian* website posted a news flash that the The Thurston County Prosecuting Attorney's Office had filed charges against 26 activists, stemming from arrests made at the Port of Olympia during antiwar protests on Nov. 13, 2007. The following day, Oct. 25, the *Olympian* printed the names of all those being charged in the front page of the South Sound section. As of Oct. 30, none of those being prosecuted have received notice of charges from the county.

Which begs two questions: Why did the city and the county prosecutors wait almost a year before filing charges against the 26? And why did they decide to contact the *Olympian* before informing those being charged?

To answer these questions requires exploring the relationship between the *Olympian*'s editorial stances and its relationship to the local authorities.

**The *Olympian*'s demands**

Earlier this year, on April 1, an Olympian editorial asked, "Why hasn't the city prosecutor's office filed charges against protesters arrested at the time of the [military] shipments last November?"

On April 30, Olympia City Manager Steve Hall met with the *Olympian* Editorial Board and informed them that the city would have charges to file in two weeks.

Two weeks later, the *Olympian* published an editorial directed at Steve Hall: "The two weeks is up today, so all eyes are on City Hall to see whether law enforcement officers mean what they say: There will be zero tolerance for vandalism and lawlessness."

The next day, the city issued a press release to the *Olympian*, stating that it was filing charges against Katie Hutchison, Patsy Hutchison, and Shyam Khanna. (See the June 2008 Works in Progress at olywip.org for more details.) The *Olympian* made the charges public, named the three people charged, and even interviewed city prosecutor Kalo Wilcox about the charges—all before the city even bothered to notify those charged.

**The *Olympian*'s next demands**

On Sept. 26, 2008, Olympia Municipal Judge Scott Ahlf dismissed the charge against Katie Hutchison. Hutchison had originally been arrested in downtown Olympia, during the Nov. 2007 Port of Olympia protests. Judge Ahlf ruled that Hutchison would be "unfairly prejudiced" without police video of the incident, which the police had shot but failed to produce.

This prompted the *Olympian* Editorial Board to publish a Oct. 8 opinion piece entitled, "Prosecutors, Police Botched Protest Cases." The piece began with, "What is wrong with police and prosecutors in this community? Why can't they make a good case against port protesters and make it stick in a court of law?"

The piece also mentioned that "Thurston County prosecutors took over the cases of more than 40 people who were arrested the night of Nov. 13 [2007]. But not one of the defendants has been charged. Again, where's the accountability?"

Two weeks later, on Oct. 23, the *Olympian* printed a follow-up editorial that stated, "[P]olice and prosecutors can't do their job and hold port protesters accountable....

"While Thurston County prosecutors took over the cases of more than 40 people arrested the night of Nov. 13, yet not one of the defendants has been charged. The bungling of the port protest cases is a great disappointment to many. The port protest cases have a high visibility in South Sound and to expect them to be handled promptly and professionally is not too much to ask. But the criminal justice system has come up empty."

The following day, the *Olympian* was notified that Thurston County was filing charges against 26 demonstrators from the night of Nov. 13. The next day, the *Olympian* published the names of those to be charged along with the charges, marking the first time that the defendants were notified. As of October 30, none of the defendants have received official notices for arraignment.

**What's it to the *Olympian*?**

Although it is unknown why the *Olympian* editorial board takes such a particular interest in prosecuting port protesters, the board does make three assumptions to justify this obsession: 1) The cases are important, "high-profile" cases; 2) The protesters are automatically guilty of the crimes they are accused of; and 3) port protesters are somehow the source of "escalating violence in the community."

**"High-profile"**

The *Olympian* editorial board has long argued that the port protest cases have a "high-profile" value that distinguishes it from other cases, regardless of the actual severity of the alleged crimes. Take, for instance, the "Oly 22" case. On May 30, 2006, 22 people were arrested at the Port of Olympia and prosecuted in Thurston County District Court. Six defendants took plea bargains. By June 12, 2007, the case against the remaining 16 defendants were dismissed due to "gross negligence." (See the July 2007 WIP for details)

In response, the *Olympian* published an editorial chastising the Thurston County Prosecutors Office for losing what it twice described as a "high-profile case."

In fact, the charge against the 16 defendants was a simple misdemeanor of second-degree trespass. The county's claim was that the defendants had placed some part of their body beyond an invisible line at the Port of Olympia—certainly not as dangerous as the usual DUIs that constitute the majority of court cases in Thurston County. That was inconsequential to the *Olympian*, which acknowledged that "it wasn't the most heinous crime on the docket." Regardless, "[g]iven the publicity and emotion surrounding the port protests...[Thurston County Prosecutor Ed] Holm should have put his best attorneys on the case from the outset."

Thus the severity of the crime was inconsequential. What mattered more was "publicity and emotion." "Publicity and emotion" somehow merited more than $25,000 and over a year for the county to pursue cases of second-degree trespass.

**An inconsequential gang war**

One can also compare the *Olympian*'s treatment of the Oly 22 arrests with an incident that happened around the same time and in the same vicinity.

In the early morning of Friday, May 26, 2006—at the same time as the May 2006 Port protests—a fight erupted outside the Vault nightclub in downtown Olympia. The *Olympian* reported that "[i]t ballooned into an unruly crowd of about 300, with several groups scuffling and flashing gang signs

▸ **OLYMPIAN** continues on page 5

## Women targeted for prosecution in nonviolent Port protests

**by Olympia Port Militarization Resistance (PMR)**

(Olympia, WA 10/25/08) Prosecutors are bringing charges against twenty-six people arrested during a nonviolent women's protest in November, 2007.

**Thoughtful, moral demonstrations**

For two weeks in November, hundreds of demonstrators blocked military equipment from moving through their publicly owned port. On Nov. 13, 39 women and 4 men were arrested during a non-violent demonstration in solidarity with each other, women nationally, and the women in Iraq.

Patty Imani, one of those charged, said Friday: "Thousands of women have been killed in Iraq. It's obscene that the city's response is to jail those of us who were only trying to stop more from dying."

The women in Olympia saw the suffering that the United States' occupation of Iraq was causing, to the Iraqi people and particularly to the women of Iraq. The protest was carefully planned to bring attention to how the war has effected the lives of women in Iraq and the United States.

**Inappropriate prosecution**

The City has waited nearly a year to bring these charges, and has suspiciously brought these new charges less than a week after their other cases against port protesters were dismissed. Also, prosecutors have a history of targeting women and people of color in protest cases. Twenty-six demonstrators have been singled out for prosecution, 25 of whom are women.

**A call for solidarity**

Those being prosecuted are calling for solidarity and support from all those who are concerned that women and people of color are being targeted for carrying out their constitutionally protected right to non-violently dissent.

# WORKS IN PROGRESS

*Works In Progress* is a free, volunteer-operated progressive community newspaper based in Olympia, Washington. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of *Works In Progress* and are solely those of the authors.

**Submissions**
Please send text as Word attachments. Artwork and photos can be sent electronically or we can scan them for you as camera-ready/black & white.

*WIP* reserves the right to publish in whole or part all submissions. For editing purposes, please enclose your phone number.

Articles may be reprinted. Please cite source.

*If you don't see your issue being covered in* Works In Progress*, it's because you aren't writing about it! (Or aren't finding someone else to cover it!)*

Send submissions to *olywip@gmail.com* or mail to Works In Progress, PO Box 295, Olympia, WA 98507-0295.

**Governing Tool**
The following statement is part of the Editorial Policy and is the governing tool for the Anti-Discrimination Clause:

WIP *will make every effort to work with the contributor of material considered by* WIP *to be offensive in order to reach a mutually agreed upon resolution, but* WIP *reserves the right as a last resort to edit or not print submitted material.*

**Mission Statement**
"Our aim is to confront injustice and encourage a participatory democracy based on economic, social, and environmental justice. *Works In Progress* is dedicated to providing a voice for those most affected by the exclusionary and unfair practices that seek to silence the oppressed."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| Mike Coday | Sandia Slaby |
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**Anti-Discrimination Clause**
We will collectively endeavor to be sensitive and respectful to all those oppressed in this society, and their issues. However, if and when we should make a mistake in this regard, we expect to acknowledge it and to express regret for injury or insult given.

**Back Issues**
Some back issues are available in the Timberland Library system. *WIP* is being archived on microfilm by the UW Library.


No more color!

**WIP Schedule**

**Submission Deadline:**
**Nov. 28**

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# ANNOUNCEMENTS/EVENTS

### POWER outage voter roundtable
Monday, November 3, Potluck at 5:30, on site childcare
6–8, 1st United Methodist Church, 1224 Legion Way SE

Bring your ballots, share what you know about candidates and initiatives. Learn from others.

### Support vigil—women opposed to war
Friday, Nov. 7, 4-6 pm, 4th & Water St.

On Nov 13, 2007 over 40 people were arrested during the "Women's Action" at the Port of Olympia - protesting the use of a civilian port to support the continued occupation in Iraq and recognizing the affects of war on women. This was the largest women-led action in Washington State to stop the war in Iraq.

Due to pressure from The Olympian and the Port of Olympia, 26 of these people are now facing charges by Thurston County District Court.

These people showed tremendous courage in their non-violent actions to end the war.

Please bring signs supporting these women and men. Organizational endorsements are encouraged - please email nsochet@riseup.net with endorsements.

### Weatherize without going into debt
Monday, November 10 from 7-9 pm at the MIXX 96 meeting room, corner of Washington and State in Olympia.

This is the second in a series of Monday evening programs presented by Olympia Climate Action offering practical ways to reduce our energy consumption and our impact on climate change. Brent Foster, thermographer with Northwest Infrared, will talk about ways to cut our heating bills and our carbon footprint by doing such things as conducting our own energy audits, discovering air leaks, calculating how much insulation and where to put it. There will also be a demonstration of insulated window coverings. For more information, please contact Barb Scavezze 878-9901.

### Low Income Parents Question Governmental Priorities
On Tuesday, November 11th at 10 am, POWER members and volunteers will be placing tampons and pads in lobby restroom of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Community Services Office (CSO), at 6737 Capitol Boulevard South, in Tumwater, to bring it up to the same standard of other Washington state governmental buildings. POWER members and volunteers noticed that free tampons and pads are available in most of the state offices they visited on the capitol campus and beyond, and for twenty-five cents at local state colleges; however there is nothing available in the bathroom the state provides to women who receive services from DSHS. For more information, email welfarerights@riseup.net.

### Community conversation on wages for housework
Cory Fisher-Hoffman, activist (US and Venezuela)

Tuesday, November 11th at 5 pm, Fertile Ground Guesthouse, 311 9th Ave SE at the little house behind the big house

Often referred to as the non-sexist Magna-Carta, the Venezuelan Constitution guarantees total social, political and economic rights to all citizens. In addition to guaranteeing full equality between men and women in employment, it is the only Constitution in Latin America that that recognizes housework as an economically productive activity, thus entitling housewives to social security benefits. Venezuela is breaking down societal norms and capitalist ideology which exclusively associate value with producing revenue.

Childcare provided at the POWER office in the Payne Room, 1st Christian Church, 701 Franklin. For more information, contact POWER at 352-9716, welfarerights@riseup.net, http://www.oly-wa.us/power/ http://www.myspace.com/parentsorganizing

### The Angry Arab and the future of the Middle East
Nov. 13, 7pm, Evergreen – Lecture Hall 1
FREE

Professor, author, commentator, and blogger of the popular the Angry Arab News Service (www.angryarab.blogspot.com), As'ad AbuKhalil will speak on the Middle East, post-inauguration. Campaign promises to be covered include: Out of Iraq into Afghanistan; Bomb, Bomb, Bomb Iran; 100 more years in Iraq; There is no better friend to Israel . Please contact sesame@evergreen.edu or call (360)867-6724.

### Freeschool community fundraising benefit
Thursday, November 13 at 7 pm at Media Island, 816 Adams Street, Olympia, WA 98501.

Artists, Musicians and more include Sunny (Australia/ SF); Chane (Portland) - dance; Francesca (Portland); spoken word; Jason (Olympia); Johnny (Seattle) - music. Headline performance by SUNNY Drake (from Australia). A gateway into personal and political transformation and anti-oppression work. Funds are needed by the Freeschool now more than ever because after two years of receiving generous and appreciated funding from the Olympia Food Co-op, the Freeschool has chosen to find independent methods of raising funds (which has cut our monthly budget by over 65%) in order to focus more of our extremely limited volunteer hours and energy on diversity, multicultural community outreach and free class coordination in a non-institutional setting. Donations are appreciated but no one will be turned away for lack of funds.

For more information on this event or the Freeschool please visit: www.FreeschoolUnity.org

### 2nd Annual student walkout against US militarism and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan
Friday, November 14, 2008, noon at the State Capitol

Students and activists from around the Olympia area will gather at noon at the State Capitol to protest continued US involvement in foreign occupation and to deliver the message to the newly elected president that we demand an end to the loss of life and wasted money overseas. This community-wide event will include students from South Puget Sound Community College, Evergreen, St. Martins, and local high schools and provide them an opportunity to network with local and regional activist groups. Groups represented include Iraq Veterans Against the War, Amnesty International Olympia, and Olympia Movement for Justice and Peace, with more to come!

Meet at SPSCC at 10:00 AM. March at 11:00. Groups are encouraged to meet us on campus or en route to the Capitol.If you or your group would like to participate in planning or organizing, we need help with fliering and outreach, or for questions or comments, please contact: spsccwalkout@yahoo.com

### Solidarity march
Saturday, November 15th, 1 pm, at Sylvester Park

In November, 2007 the community came together to non-violently protest our public port's participation in the US slaughter of Iraqi peoples. On Saturday, November 15th we will march in commemoration of the November 2007 port resistance actions and in protest of the selective prosecution of women, people of color and queers. Not one white straight male has been targeted for prosecution. This is a call for solidarity! Stand with us and march. We'll meet at Sylvester Park (Capitol and Legion, downtown Olympia).

### Colombia peace movement speaker
Tuesday, November 18, 6-8 p.m., Seminar II, Building A1105, Evergreen

Colombian theologian Father Rafael Gallego will be speaking on "Citizens' Initiatives for Peace in Colombia: The Case of Tiquisio." Fr. Gallego is from a rural community resisting a gold mine and suffering in the Colombian civil war. Father Gallego is the parish priest of Tiquisio (Bolivar state) and is a philosopher and theologian specializing in human rights and International Humanitarian Law. He has led the creation of the community radio station, the peasant school-farm and above all he is considered a threat by all the economic, political and military local powers. Father Gallego's small village, Tiquisio, is located in the heart of the beautiful Serrania de San Lucas in northern Colombia and literally sitting on top of a gigantic gold mine coveted by multinational corporations.

The event is sponsored by Amnesty International, CISPES, El Centro, OMJP, and other campus and community groups, and is open to the public. For background information, see the Colombia Support Network at http://www.colombiasupport.net

### POWER-ful ART: Call to artists
Saturday and Sunday, November 29th and 30th from 10–5, Studio Four 18, 418 Washington Street in downtown Olympia

Show and sell your art or crafts and raise money for POWER, Parents Organizing for Welfare and Economic Rights, a local organization of low-income parents and community members fighting for social and economic justice. Artists may keep up to 50% of the proceeds. Find affordable and unique gifts, live music, yummy treats.

### Talk by David Ray Griffin on "The New Pearl Harbor Revisited: 9/11, the cover-up and the exposé"
Wednesday, December 3rd at 7pm, The Capitol Theater.

This talk will focus on the inconsistencies in the Government's official story regarding how the events of 9/11/01 unfolded. Citizens in many countries are waging a war on the cover-up of the basis for the so-called war on terror—this basis being the official interpretation of the 9/11 attacks. David Ray Griffin has revealed dozens of omissions, distortions, and contradictions in the official story in a way that provides undeniable evidence of its falsity. The New Pearl Harbor Revisited presents a powerful exposé of the false narrative that has been driving the mainstream political agenda since 9/11.

# Isthmus update

**by Janet Blanding**

As the city council moves towards enacting an upzone of the isthmus between Budd Inlet and Capitol Lake, with a final vote expected on December 9, citizens in opposition have continued to resist this unpopular proposal. Friends of the Waterfront, Oly Vision 20/20, People for a Participatory City and the Olympia Park Isthmus Association are all continuing to make plans and deliberate on strategies for preserving Olympia's character despite the current city council's disregard for the will of the public.

The successful city initiative, which requires the city to conduct a feasibility study of public acquisition of the unoccupied portions of the isthmus, does not seem to have deterred the council from moving ahead with the rezone. The initiative was signed by more than 5000 people in little more than a month. Although the city is making plans to conduct the feasibility study, the council is nonetheless forging ahead with the zoning change, a move which is disappointing and appears unwise to many rezone opponents. As the economic climate worsens and the housing market collapses, many people wonder if the project will ever break ground. Jeff Jaksich, former planning commissioner and treasurer of the Olympia Capitol Park Foundation, recently called the city council's decision to proceed "imprudent," stating that "it's unlikely given the credit crisis that exists out there that these condos would ever be funded."

Yet rezoning the isthmus will immediately raise the value of the land, regardless of whether or not the Larida Passage condominium project can be funded, making the public acquisition of the land less likely. Although councilmember Joe Hyer mentioned at a recent council meeting that an assessor told him that the rezone would not dramatically change the value of the land, many people dispute that assertion. Using information provided in the city's Environmental Impact Study, the rezone will enable Triway to 171,000 square feet of housing and 77,000 square feet of commercial space; the current zoning would allow Triway to build only 83,000 square feet of commercial space. "If you look at the numbers, there's a minor reduction in how much commercial [space] they can build, and in return they're getting 170 thousand square feet of housing," said Thad Curtz of Friends of the Waterfront. "It's hard to imagine that doesn't represent a very large economic bonus, the ability to build that extra 170 thousand square feet at the cost of only 9 thousand square feet of commercial."

The tax exemption that was the subject of so much public objection may in fact not apply to the Larida Passage project after all; at a recent meeting of the city's land use committee, committee members Joan Machlis, Rhenda Strub and Karen Messmer discussed the possibility of excluding the isthmus from the downtown areas subject to the exemption. Although this does remove one significant objection to the project, most people remain opposed to it. It has been suggested, however, that removing the tax exemption may serve to soften up the already weak opposition to the project that exists on the city council.

Concerns have also been voiced about the council's lack of regard for how this rezone will impact the relationship Olympia has with the state government. "They know state officials are opposed to this," said one concerned Olympian who asked not to be identified, "but it's not having any impact." The state recently unveiled plans for the $220 million Heritage Center slated for construction on the Capitol Campus. The Heritage Center will feature large decks, designed to take advantage of the view of the Olympics to the north, views which will be blocked by the 5 to 7 story condos proposed by Triway Enterprises. The Heritage Center project, designed by the Seattle architectural firm of SRG Partnerships, also features a north–south oriented glass atrium, designed to preserve views to the north *through* the building. "The future of that building could in fact be determined by whether they vote for the rezone – it could get killed," says Jaksich. "The city council seems not to understand that it has real implications for this community that are very significant."

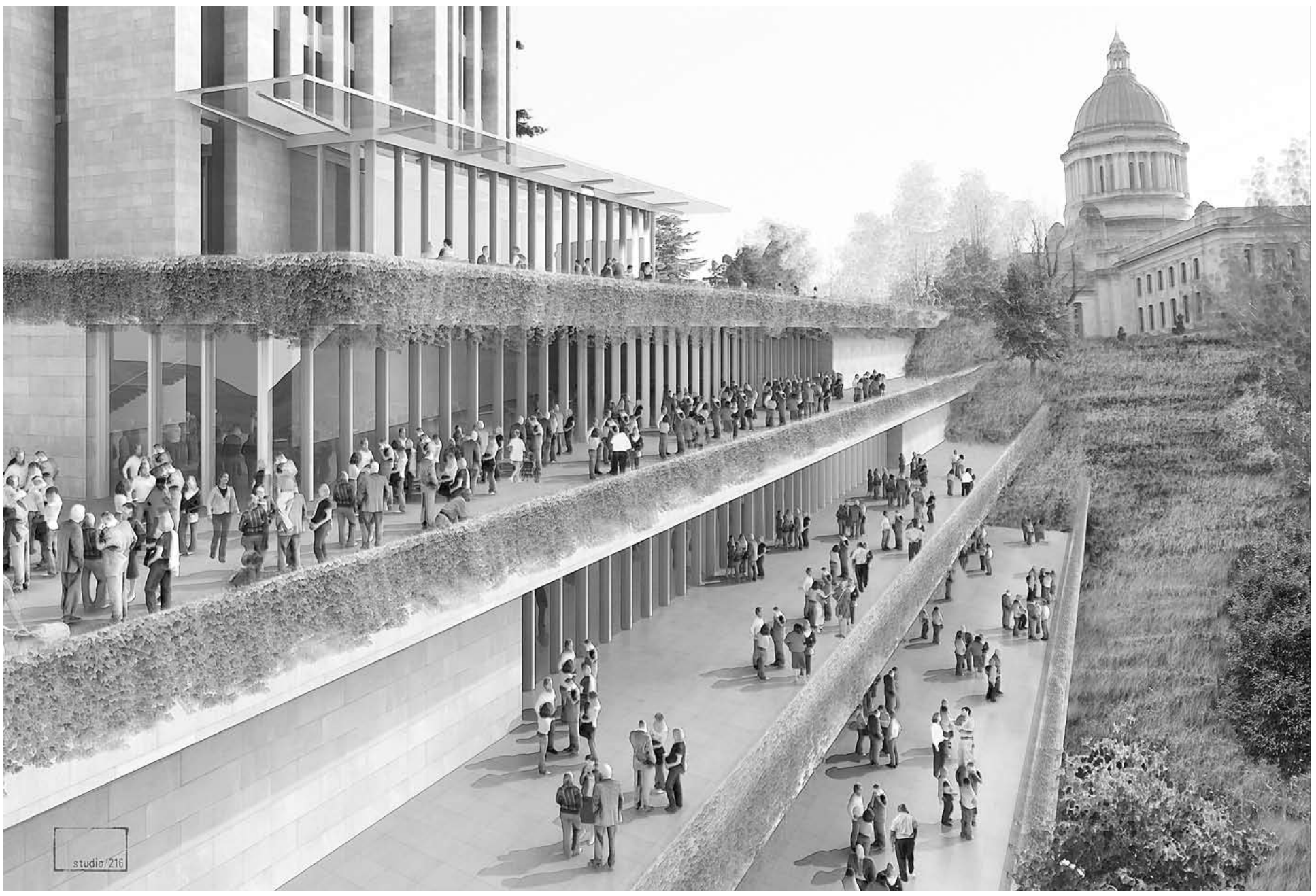
Jaksich reported that the Olympia Capitol Park Foundation has begun to collect pledges with the aim of acquiring the land, with the ultimate aim of donating it to the state for use as a park. An affiliated group, the Olympia Isthmus Park Association is monitoring the progress of the feasibility study mandated by the recent successful city initiative; this feasibility study must be completed within five months. Jaksich, along with many other people engaged with this issue, is surprised and disappointed that the city council is moving forward with the upzone before the feasibility study is completed.

As the city of Olympia struggles to balance its budget as sales tax revenues decline, the prospect of expensive litigation if this upzone passes looms. Several attorneys are on board with rezone opponent groups, and pro bono legal research by experts in the Shoreline Management Act is currently underway. Olympia resident hali panneton remarked that, "In these tough times, the last thing Olympia needs is to foot the bill to pay for lawsuits to enact something that eighty percent of our citizens don't want anyway, something that just benefits a wealthy developer. How dare the city council do this to us!"

At a recent Friends of the Waterfront meeting, attendance was as strong as ever, as activists discussed possible strategies for preserving Olympia's waterfront views. Although some people in attendance felt that the current city council was impervious to the broad public pressure—which has been manifested by the large turnout at public hearings, overwhelmingly opposed to the rezone, along with the remarkable success of the initiative—others were more optimistic. Jaksich maintains that the city council is "open and reachable," and that it is still worth the effort to communicate with them. "The public needs to reach out to them and share their concerns on a personal level, because in a formal setting they don't seem to be hearing what the public is telling them."

Others involved in this issue expressed less faith in the city council to behave in a manner responsive to the public, calling them "unbudgeable." Some are already looking to the future, planning to support candidates for the elections in 2009 when the council seats of Joe Hyer, Jeff Kingsbury, Karen Messmer and Joan Machlis will be up for re-election. "I don't think there's a politician in Olympia that missed how we feel about this issue," said one observer. Let's hope some candidates step forward who understand and value Olympia the way it is, who are ready to truly represent their constituents, will step forward to serve the public, instead of the interests of a rich developer.

Pictured above and below: Artist renditions of the Heritage Center on the Capitol Campus.



# Interview with presidential candidate Gloria La Riva

*Gloria La Riva is a presidential candidate for the Party for Socialism and Liberation. She was in Olympia on Oct. 20 and took questions from the* Works in Progress *staff.*

***What has historically sustained the US foreign policy's trade blockade on Cuba?***

Since the US blockade was formally passed by the Kennedy administration in 1962, through every administration since, the US government has maintained a very tight economic blockade on Cuba. The blockade is part of the US government's intent to destroy the Cuban Revolution, overthrow the Cuban government and try to install a government that does the bidding of the United States. It's not even so much for the wealth that the US corporations used to own in Cuba although that's certainly a big reason.

It's because, more and more, Cuba is providing an example to Latin American countries like Venezuela, Bolivia, Paraguay and others, showing that when people take power and control of their resources and their land, they can provide for the people in a truly sustainable way. That's what's happened in Cuba with the socialist revolution. And that's what the US wants to destroy.

It doesn't make sense for American people when they hear about this, Southern farmers in Arkansas, Alabama, Louisiana, Florida, all the southern states are desperate to trade with Cuba, because farmers don't have a market to sell their goods. Cuba needs to import food and it's far cheaper to buy from US growers than to ship it from even Latin America or Europe.

***Could we anticipate change in that policy from any of the two major presidential candidates?***

I think in its essence US policy will not change. Both candidates, both parties have maintained that they will maintain the blockade against Cuba.

Obama has said 'I will maintain the blockade as president but I promise to lift the travel restrictions on Cuban-Americans and the right for them to send money home.' So we'll see if that happens. If that happens, I think it will start to open up a little bit more. Not by act of the president but by pressure of the people.

***What should diplomacy between Cuba and the US look like?***

Normal trade relations, the right of peoples to travel to each other's country. It's up to the US because it's the US who imposes these polices. Most people don't know that Americans are prohibited from traveling to Cuba or you could face a quarter of a million dollar fine or 10 years imprisonment. That's our democracy.

***How do you stand on choice issues: abortion, birth control and comprehensive sex education?***

I grew up in the '60s and '70s and was a great beneficiary as a young woman at that time of all that the women's movement fought for. We fought for the right for all women to control our own bodies and choose to have an abortion if we wanted to or needed to. It was our choice. It took the women's movement to fight for the issues of equality and of course the technological, scientific advances of the pill were a great advancement for women.

I think we've seen a lot of regression, but still in my campaign and my party and much of the progressive movement, we demand, still, a woman's right to choose whether to have a child or not. And if you choose to have a child, also the right to raise a child in a safe, healthy environment with support for children. So we stand for the right of choice. And of course, it doesn't mean that it's preferable to do that, you know, it's not the best medical procedure for women. It can be traumatic. It's certainly not easy but also a lot of abortions take place, or unwanted pregnancies take place, because of the lack of sexual education. So, the women's movement and all progressive people, we need to keep fighting for it.

> Who feels their country is really free when they see US tanks rolling down the streets and US soldiers with their guns drawn?

***What would, for example, be tied into measures to be enacted to protect a woman's right to choose in the future?***

We still have Roe v. Wade. It's been somewhat weakened. There are some possible hammer blows being dealt by the Supreme Court. However, I even think that this very right-wing court knows if they dare to overturn Roe v. Wade, there'll be a real strong reaction from women. You're not going to drive us back into the old days.

***The issue of race relations was briefly tolerated by corporate media with Obama's speech in March. What are some obstacles African-Americans face regardless of where they live? What issues are often avoided by the media to prevent confronting these obstacles?***

We believe that it is absolutely fundamental for the struggle of the African-American community and the need for everybody else in this country to have full solidarity in this struggle. The need to fight racism in all its forms. Against all manifestations of racism and of course against sexism, and against homophobia. But the biggest obstacle that we face in this country, to unite all working people, all people who need a job to survive, all people who are not able to work. All of us need to join together to realize it's not black people that are the problem, it's not immigrants needing a job that are the problem of the crisis we face. If we join together and overcome the divisions that keep us from being together, we can change this world, change this society, and have a life of dignity for everybody.

The first thing we have to remember is racism plays a very big part in keeping the black community oppressed in a very unequal situation. Police brutality affects black people more so than anybody. Murders, the prison system, the death penalty, all people in prison are poor. That's why, for example, a part of our program is a demand for reparations. And people go, "Well, how's that money going to be paid?" We're talking about a full affirmative action program. We're talking about millions of jobs to be created for especially African-American youth and Latino youth, many who don't even have a chance to start a job because they won't get hired, because of racism. Everybody needs a job.

***There are over 800 documented US military installations around the world. What long-term consequences affect the people of these countries where installations are?***

Yeah, there are US bases all over the world. For example, there are 57 military bases in Iraq.

So the US role abroad is a message to the people of those countries that they occupy that you better keep in line because if you think you're going to fight your government, which is acting out of US big business and military, you're going to have us to answer to. And the US military has often been deployed in those countries. It's a big threat. Who feels their country is really free when they see US tanks rolling down the streets and US soldiers with their guns drawn? We call for the immediate closing down of all US bases abroad and of course no US tanks in the United States as well.

***You were in New Orleans during Katrina, in what ways is capitalism responsible for the devastation in New Orleans?***

Well, all of the money that was provided by the government finally—after weeks—did not go to help and rebuild the city. But the Bush administration provided billions of dollars to corporations who profit-gouged and made money off the tragedy of the people. It's often in natural disasters that the class nature of how the rich get rich and the poor get poor, and how the system serves the rich is exposed ever more. That happened in New Orleans. It was the French Quarter that was rehabilitated first because it's a big tourist area. And you can still drive through the lower ninth ward, other parishes that were devastated by Katrina, and they're still not rebuilt.

***What can be done for survivors who were and are displaced from their community after the hurricane?***

The biggest effort and the most success of recovery and resettlement in New Orleans has come from individual efforts and community efforts. Common Ground was one huge great community effort of people from New Orleans that survived and remained there during the hurricane and thousands of volunteers who have come in to rebuild homes, collected money. It's been a community effort, not the government. Under capitalism, you can win a gain but it can be taken back. Why we're running this campaign around the country and struggling so hard to get this ballot in 12 states including Washington state, the message is people must fight for justice today and tomorrow. But in the end, it's going to take a socialist system. Where all the wealth in society is owned by the people in common and where the people make decisions of production... stop building cars and build mass transit that people can ride for free. The problem is private property and the capitalist system where a handful of wealthy can own the means of production, the wealth that creates wealth, while the rest of us are subject to the decision of whether to shut down plants. In other words, it's only socialism that can only really meet the needs of people and guarantee housing, health care, education, social peace, the end of racism, the end of police brutality and have a life of dignity for all.

*See the unedited interview fully online at olywip.org. To find out more about the La Riva campaign, check out pslweb.org.*

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▸ **OLYMPIAN** continued from page 1

as they clogged Franklin Street....It took officers about 45 minutes to disband [the] crowd by using pepper spray and batons." OPD had to call for assistance from Lacey, Tumwater, Thurston County Sheriff's Office, and the Washington State Patrol. The *Olympian* quoted OPD Commander Tor Bjornstad as saying, "This was the worst situation some of [our officers] said they've ever seen downtown."

From the incident, two Fort Lewis soldiers were arrested, at least one of whom served in a Stryker Brigade. One of the soldiers "allegedly charged toward officers when he was ordered to back down," "suffered minor injuries in a scuffle with [a police] officer," and "was arrested for obstructing officers and resisting arrest." The other soldier was arrested for malicious mischief after allegedly "trying to tear off a car door."

The *Olympian* provided no follow-up to this event, no news article about the results of the charges, no editorial calling for more prosecutions, or even an update on the charges against the two Fort Lewis soldiers. Amazingly enough, a battle of 300 people in the middle of downtown Olympia did not merit "high-profile" status by the *Olympian*, despite the fact that the single *Olympian* article about the event recalled similar incidents of downtown nightclub violence, such as the discharging of a gun the previous week, a gang-related killing two years earlier, and a general "recent spate of violence" attributed to "people with street gang ties, soldiers," and "underage patrons."

Instead, the *Olympian* spent a year calling for the prosecution of the Oly 22—who were arrested four days after the Vault incident—for the "high profile" charge of second-degree trespass.

**Sex, alcohol, and antiwar protests**

Three weeks after the Oly 22 dismissals, on July 1, 2007, the *Olympian* attacked the Thurston County Prosecutor's Office for being "caught up in one scandal after another." The four "scandals" named were:

1. Deputy Prosecutor David Soukup charged with DUI.

2. Deputy Prosecutor William Halstead arrested after drinking and having sex with an unidentified employee of the Prosecutor's Office in a women's restroom at Qwest Field.

3. Thurston County Prosecutor Ed Holm's office found liable for sexual harassment and sexual discrimination, with the plaintiffs—former employees—being awarded $1.5 million. And finally....

4. Losing the Oly 22 case, which again, had a "high community profile."

At this point, one can reasonably conclude that the "high profile" status of the Oly 22 trespass charges was a result of the *Olympian* highly profiling it.

And in case anyone forgot, on Oct. 8 this year, the *Olympian* reminded readers that the port protests are "high-profile."

**High profile does not mean guilty**

In the same Oct. 8 editorial, the *Olympian* lamented that although "[m]ore than 60 people were arrested during the [Nov. 2007 port] protests...only a handful have been held accountable." The false assumption was that the people arrested had something to be accountable for. This call for "accountability" is also a repeating pattern in *Olympian* editorials against port protesters.

When the case of Katie Hutchison was dismissed, the *Olympian* responded that the police and prosecutors had "botched" the case and that it was "a terrible message to send to the South Sound community." The assumption was that since Hutchison had been arrested, she should have been found guilty. In reality, the case was dismissed because of all the video shot by police during the two weeks of port protests, the video of the day Hutchison was arrested was inexplicably missing. It is not difficult to imagine that that videotape would have contained exculpatory evidence, especially since the *Olympian*'s own videographer, Matt McVay, actually videotaped Hutchison's arrest, and it also showed that Hutchison was wrongfully arrested. The *Olympian* video showed Hutchison approaching police officers with her hands raised. As she stood on the sidewalk facing the police, she attempted to inquire about her sister, who had just been severely pepper-sprayed and arrested. It was at that moment that the police grabbed Hutchison and dragged her away to be arrested, although Hutchison had not committed a crime. Hutchison later recounted that one of the officers accused her of being a protest leader, which was why they wanted to remove her from the scene.

At this point, one can reasonably conclude that the "high profile" status of the Oly 22 trespass charges was a result of the *Olympian* highly profiling it.

The *Olympian* could have responded to the dismissal by asking why Hutchison was arrested in the first place and why she should ever have been prosecuted. Instead, the *Olympian* sarcastically responded, "There goes another case." For the *Olympian*, the only satisfactory conclusion to a port case is a guilty verdict, and anything less would constitute a "botched" case, a "blown case," or a "bungl[ed]" case. The *Olympian* has never even congratulated the city for securing plea bargains in some port cases.

One wonders about the "terrible message to send to the South Sound community": that Hutchison is walking the streets a free woman, free to approach more police officers.

In another example, a June 5, 2006 editorial entitled "Protest Costs Must be Paid by Someone" typifies *Olympian* Editorial Board logic. Regarding the May 2006 protests, the *Olympian* claimed $7500 in damage was done at the port. Ignoring the fact that a claim for restitution from the Port of Olympia contradicted this amount, the *Olympian* declared, "More than 20 people were arrested. They should shoulder full restitution costs." Never mind the fact that those arrested were charged with trespass, not property damage. Never mind the fact that the trespass charge was based on the idea that the defendants simply had some part of their body over an invisible line. Never mind the fact that the restitution cost was based on alleged port damage that occurred the day before the defendants were arrested, as well as during the time the defendants were sitting in jail. The *Olympian* had already determined that someone had to pay, regardless of whether the defendants had anything to do with alleged damage.

**The Tony Overman arrest**

We can contrast the *Olympian* editorial board's treatment of port protest arrestees, with the treatment of *Olympian* photographer Tony Overman's recent arrest.

On June 6, 2008, Overman was reporting on the scene of a house fire. He got into an altercation with a Lacey police detective and was arrested and charged with simple assault and obstructing an officer.

On June 8, the *Olympian* published an article in which *Olympian* publisher (and permanent member of the *Olympian* Editorial Board) John Winn Miller declared that "the newspaper will fight the charges." Lacey police spokesperson John Suessman was reported to say that the Lacey Police Department "values its relationship with The *Olympian*." Said Suessman: "We certainly don't want this incident to get in the way of our positive relationship, not only with Tony [Overman] but with the other staff at The *Olympian* as well." Overman was given the last word: "There has to be accountability about why this happened and who caused it."

Two days later, the *Olympian* published another article on Overman's arrest, entitled: "Accounts Differ on Encounter of Photographer, Detective." The article gave two paragraphs to the Lacey detective's side of the story, followed by twice as many words for Overman's side of the story. The article then evoked Suessman: "Suessman reiterated prior statements that the Lacey Police Department values its positive working relationship with The *Olympian*, and wants to continue that. The department is conducting an internal investigation of the incident based on Overman's complaint to Lacey police about the incident, Suessman said." The article ended with Overman's thorough description of injuries he sustained by Lacey police.

Two weeks later, the Lacey city prosecutor dropped both charges against Overman.

There was no call from the *Olympian* shaming Lacey prosecutors for not pursuing charges against Overman. There were no demands that Overman "must be held accountable." There were no condemnations for the "botched case." It was automatically presumed that Overman was innocent until proven guilty.

And although Overman was accorded a full account of his injuries from the Lacey police, the same was not provided for port protesters. On Nov. 11, 2007, then–Olympia City Councilmember TJ Johnson assembled a press conference for residents to detail their injuries sustained by police while nonviolently protesting at the Port of Olympia. Dozens spoke and recounted details of their treatment by police. A Nov. 14, 2007 *Olympian* editorial dismissed this event as a meeting "where protesters whined about their treatment at the hands of police," claiming that the demonstrators "asked for it."

**Nonviolence begets violence**

The third component of the demonization of port protesters is to identify them as the source of "escalating violence in the community," instigated by "protesters" and "activists," as a May 14, 2008 editorial assessed.

▸ **OLYMPIAN** continued on page 7

# Second letter to Mayor Mah regarding Dead Prez incident

October 6, 2008

Dear Mayor Mah and Olympia City Council Members,

Thank you for your letter of June 26th responding to our request that you organize a citizen's taskforce to investigate the actions of members of the Olympia city police during the February 15, 2008 incident on our campus.

We are disappointed that you and the Council have decided not to establish a citizen's taskforce. We fear that what happened on our campus is not, as you suggest, "a unique and unfortunate occurrence", but rather a reflection of what City Manager Hall described in his letter of June 11th the "tensions (that) have risen between some students and members of the Olympia Police Department over the past several months."

Our students suffered greatly due to the February incident in terms of personal injuries, arrests, jail time, felony charges, prosecutions, legal expenses, financial payments, release of confidential information and loss of class time. The incident continues to have repercussions on our campus and our larger community. As students return this fall, we want them to feel safe. If there are things we can do to resolve these tensions Mr. Hall refers to and prevent injurious clashes between our students and the Olympia Police, this will require the cooperation of the city council, city government and the Olympia police.

As a first step, we want to invite you and any Council member(s) you may designate, City Manager Steve Hall, Police Chief Gary Michel and Lieutenant Ray Holmes of the Office of Professional Standards to meet at the College with the signers of this letter for an information sharing meeting. We are proposing an afternoon meeting, Monday or Wednesday, October 20th or 22nd, whichever date is more convenient to you. Again, we ask that you work directly with Faculty Member Dan Leahy in responding to our invitation and in organizing the specific format of this meeting. Dan's office phone is 867-6478. His email: danleahy43@yahoo.com

Sincerely,

Jeff Antonelis-Lapp, Stephen Beck, Peter Bohmer, Krishna Chowdary, Sally Cloninger, Kathleen Eamon, Anne Fischel, Beatriz Flores Gtz., Russell Fox, Judith Gabriele, Larry Geri, Jorge Gilbert, Jose Gomez, Zoltan Grossman, Jeanne Hahn, C.C. Herbison, Sara Huntington, Ernestine Kimbro, Stephanie Kozick, Dan Leahy, Cheri Lucas-Jennings, Paul McMillin, Laurie Meeker, David Muehleisen, Ralph Murphy, Alice Nelson, Lin Nelson, Charles Pailthorp, Sarah Pedersen, John Perkins, Rita Pougiales, Susan Preciso, Bill Ransom, Andrew Reece, Liza Rognas, Sarah Ryan, Therese Saliba, Terry Setter, Gilda Sheppard, Ken Tabbutt, Michael Vavrus, Ted Whitesell, Sarah Williams, Elizabeth Williamson, David Wolach, Tom Womeldorff, Tony Zaragoza, Julia Zay and E.J. Zita.

Cc: Steve Hall, City Manager, Chief Gary Michel, Lieutenant Ray Holmes

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# Protests intensify against Border Patrol checkpoints in Washington State

**by Stop the Checkpoints Committee**

Incensed at Border Patrol roadblocks that stop every car and check drivers' nationalities, over 200 demonstrators took to the streets on Sept. 20 in Port Angeles, Washington. It was the third and largest protest yet by residents on the Olympic Peninsula, a rural area of rain forests and waterways in the northwest corner of the state. Access is primarily by ferry boat or by Highway 101, which loops around the peninsula.

The Sept. 20 demonstration was sparked by a protest three weeks earlier by the classmates of two teenagers who were detained on Aug. 20. Both were swiftly deported to Mexico, despite the fact that both young men grew up in Forks, a small coastal town. One of them, Edgar Ayala, 18, had just graduated with honors from the local high school. Protest organizer Tanya Ward, a tribal member from the Hoh reservation near Forks, said, "Just as Native Americans were pushed aside and shoved onto reservations, they want to do the same thing to immigrants. Who gives them the right?"

**Protest escalates**

Meanwhile, longtime Port Angeles resident Lois Danks, who heads up the local chapter of Radical Women, put out a call for a Sept. 6 community meeting to plan actions against the checkpoints. Galvanized by word of the student protest in Forks, residents converged from five cities and towns across the Peninsula. They were family members of deported immigrant workers, Native American tribal members, small business owners, students, teachers, feminists, and civil liberties and peace activists. There were people who had never protested before combined with seasoned organizers from the Socialist, Green, Freedom Socialist and Democratic parties. Then and there the group decided to form a committee and named it "Stop the Checkpoints."

The new committee chose to kick off their campaign with a Sept. 20 march and rally in Port Angeles, the largest city on the Peninsula, because the Border Patrol is headquartered there. Committee members blanketed the region with a flyer featuring the Statue of Liberty, with the slogans "Defend Civil Liberties"; "No Racial Profiling, Raids & Detentions"; "Defend Immigrant Workers and their Families"; "No Police State on the Olympic Peninsula!"

The flyer struck a chord with residents outraged at being stopped and interrogated on their way to school, work and the grocery store.

Feelings were already running high in reaction to frequent security spot-checks at the ferry docks. In June ferry worker John Norby, backed by his union, blew the whistle and refused to cooperate when an undercover Border Patrol agent attempted to recruit him to spy on passengers.

By August, increased funding for the Border Patrol resulted in 45 permanently stationed agents in this sparsely populated, economically depressed area. In the last month, the Patrol, assisted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and local police, have repeatedly set up unannounced checkpoints at several locations along Highway 101. Twenty-five people were detained—10 for minor drug offenses and 14 for not carrying proper immigration papers. News of the upcoming Sept. 20 action quickly spread as the local press and Spanish language TV picked up the story and an article by *People's Weekly World* journalist Tim Wheeler was circulated widely.

In June ferry worker John Norby, backed by his union, blew the whistle and refused to cooperate when an undercover Border Patrol agent attempted to recruit him to spy on passengers.

**Speaking out for immigrants and civil liberties**

People carpooled to the Sept. 20 march and rally from throughout the peninsula, and some from as far away as Seattle and Victoria, British Columbia. A contingent of Hoh tribal youth led the diverse group of marchers, which included everyone from babies in strollers to retirees, and residents of all colors, foreign and native-born alike.

Addressing a spirited crowd, Stop the Checkpoints coordinator Danks called on the government to "Stop this drive to criminalize people and whip up fear! Stop trying to equate immigrants with terrorists and drug smugglers. The Olympic Peninsula is not about to be a pilot project for a police state."

Speaker Beatriz Giraldo, originally from Colombia, said all the Homeland Security money that funds stepped-up harassment by Border Patrol and other immigration agents should be used to help victims of domestic violence and other abuses.

Peace activist Diana Somerville read a statement by a Mexican friend who was too terrified to appear in public. The statement described how parents who are detained "can't even make a phone call to their children or get an attorney, and are deported very fast, without due process." Long time resident and daycare teacher Manuela Velasquez described children wetting themselves and throwing up at school for fear of losing their parents, and families having to sneak to the store at night to get groceries.

Twenty-one-year-old Alex Olson-Bick who helped found the new group, told of a Costa Rican friend who, although legally in the country, was detained and interrogated for hours. When finally released, immigration agents threatened it would happen "over and over again."

Christina López, Seattle Radical Women Organizer, charged the government with escalating anti-immigrant roundups in order to pave the way for guest worker programs, which she warned, "turn workers into indentured servants, with no right to organize unions or fight for better working conditions."

Susan Dorazio of the Socialist Party Women's Commission reminded everyone at the rally "the human spirit and desire for freedom and justice remain strong in our communities. Another world is possible!"

**Grassroots rising**

As Iranian-born Layla Iranshad, a teacher from Forks, summed it up, "Undocumented Latinos are not alone in challenging these checkpoints. US citizens realize that arbitrary Border Patrol checkpoints are bringing this country one step closer to a complete police state."

In the days following the rally, numerous offers of help, legal advice and fundraising ideas poured into the Stop the Checkpoints Committee, which is currently planning follow-up actions. Committee members can be reached at *info@stopthecheckpoints.com* or 360-452-7534.

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Stop the Checkpoint rally Sept. 20, 2008 at Federal building in Port Angeles, WA. (Photo by Melina Rivera)

# Expanding border powers creating 'constitution-free zone' that covers two-thirds of Americans

**by The American Civil Liberties Union**

OCTOBER 22, 2008—The extraordinary powers of customs and border agents to invade the privacy of individuals at the US border are spreading inland and creating what amounts to a "Constitution-free Zone" that covers fully two-thirds of the American population, the American Civil Liberties Union said today in a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, DC.

"The authorities can do things at the border that they could never do to citizens and residents inside our country under the Constitution," said Caroline Fredrickson, director of the ACLU Washington Legislative Office. "Yet the government is asserting that some of these powers extend as far as 100 miles inside the actual border. It is a classic example of law enforcement powers expanding far beyond their proper boundaries – in this case, literally."

At the press conference, the ACLU released a map showing the 100-mile "border region" claimed by the government, and cities and states that fall within it. The map, which was created using the latest census data, shows that fully two-thirds of the US population, including 9 of the nation's top 10 largest metro areas, is within the border zone.

"Americans and Washington policymakers may believe that this is a problem confined to the dusty sands of Arizona or Texas, or the San Diego-Tijuana border, but it stretches far inland across the United States," said Barry Steinhardt, director of the ACLU's Technology and Liberty Program. "If allowed to stand, sooner or later a factory worker in southern New Hampshire, a farmer in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, or Joe the plumber outside Toledo, Ohio will find themselves trapped in a Constitution-free Zone."

Also appearing at the press conference were two individuals who spoke about their personal experience with these overextended powers: San Diego music professor Craig Johnson, and Vince Peppard, a San Diego retiree who with his wife was stopped by the authorities on a road east of San Diego, at least 15 miles from the US border. Peppard and his wife proved they were US citizens but still found themselves subject to demands that they allow a search, interrogated, threatened and harassed.

"Now I'm actually feeling nervous when I'm going to work. . . that I might get pulled over by Border Patrol and asked, 'where's your passport?'" said Peppard, who appeared at the event via videotape. "And now – do I have to carry my passport with me when I go to Home Depot or something?"

"In the United States, citizens are not supposed to need an internal passport," said Steinhardt. "This is our country and we are free to go where we please, without being stopped and interrogated by the authorities, as long as we are not behaving illegally or in a way that is clearly suspicious."

"Police action is not the only way to fight for freedom," said Fredrickson. "This is a classic case where Americans need to push back against their government to preserve the core freedoms that we have always enjoyed."

An interactive version of the "Constitution-free Zone" map, a video of Vince Peppard, and other materials are available at *www.aclu.org/constitutionfreezone*

▸ **OLYMPIAN** continued from page 5

According to the piece, "The port protests launched a series of confrontations between police and unruly crowds." Thus the port protests led to the overturning of the police car at the Dead Prez show on Feb. 14 and then to the broken windows at the May Day rally. Such a direct lineage should not be blindly assumed, however. The opinion piece made no attempts to substantiate the assumption, and thus there are no arguments to refute.

Moreover, it is not difficult to imagine that even without the port protests, the Dead Prez incident could have transpired similarly. One only needs to imagine the following elements: a hip-hop performance with a socially conscious group such as Dead Prez; a young African-American male arrested for a crime he did not commit; police attempting to disperse the resultant crowd by deploying pepper-spray and batons; and after assaulting the crowd, the police leaving one of their own cars at the scene. There is no need to have the experience of the port to give such a crowd ideas.

As for the May Day rally—which the *Olympian* admits was "hijacked" by non-organizers—it is easy to find several precedents for violent May Day clashes around world. Like it or not, the more violent, "Anarchist" traditions of May Day preceded the port protests. It might not be an agreeable concept of May Day, but it apparently is one that has now manifested in Olympia, regardless of the port and cannot be curtailed by more port prosecutions.

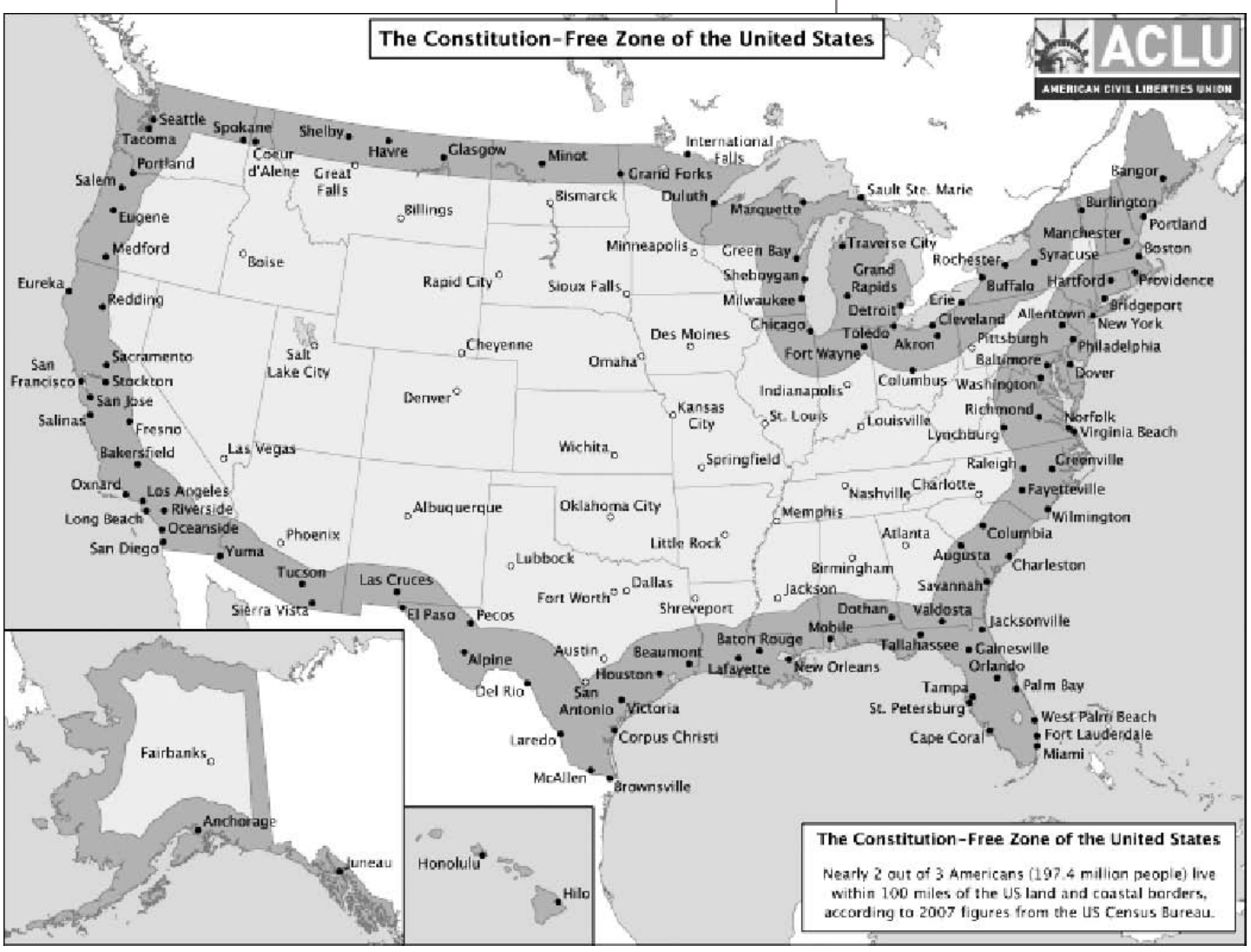
The recent prosecutions of the 26 port protesters is yet another attempt by the *Olympian* to deal with a scourge that is less actualized and less linear than is imagined by an editorial board that holds too much power and is too out of touch with reality.

Those charged are scapegoated for everything negative that may or may not have happened at the port and elsewhere. The *Olympian* editorial board looked to "City Hall to see whether law enforcement officers mean what they say: There will be zero tolerance for vandalism and lawlessness." What the editorial board failed to notice was that none of the 61 people arrested at the Port of Olympia were arrested for vandalism or even for any sort of violent act. Moreover, in light of two weeks of action at the port, specific incidents of violence instigated by port protesters were rare. This is beyond the comprehension of the editorial board, as it has neglected to chastise the police for not charging anyone from the port for specific violent acts.

Although the *Olympian* Editorial Board praises itself for "taking a strong stand against the war in Iraq"— that is, since July 2007—the board has never supported any antiwar move. They have criticized activists for "tarnishing the anti-war effort" while having never supported any "anti-war effort" themselves. They declare that they "disagree with [the] methods" of activists, but offer no methods of their own to end the war. As far back as 2004, the editorial board ridiculed a phone-in campaign to encourage the port to refuse military shipments—a campaign that was initially misrepresented by an *Olympian* article that faked an interview with a local activist organizer. "[T]aking a strong stand" is not enough if all you're doing is just standing there.

Amazingly, although the *Olympian* is generally derided by the public, it still wields influence as the only daily newspaper for the region.

A Dec. 4, 2007 letter to the *Olympian* by the then–Port of Olympia Commissioners acknowledged that "there were many peaceful protesters involved," in the Nov. 2007 port protests, but that "a few blocked roads with destructive and unlawful means...." The *Olympian* simplified this letter with the accompanying headline, "Port Protesters Were Not Peaceful."

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# Drinking the ACORN Kool-Aid

## How cries of voter fraud cover up GOP elections theft

**by Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Greg Palast**

Virtually the entire mainstream electronic media drank ACORN Kool-Aid this month brewed up by the Republican National Committee. Almost no one seriously challenged John McCain's comical assertions that ACORN, a grassroots voter registration group, "is now on the verge of maybe perpetrating one of the greatest frauds in voter history in this country, maybe destroying the fabric of democracy."

While the Republicans had the distracted media searching for links between Obama and ACORN, RNC operatives were busily completing one of the most massive voter suppression and purging efforts in American history, stealing hundreds of thousands of Democratic votes across the embattled swing states and striving to arrange chaos and endless lines at the voting booths next week.

First the facts about ACORN. Months ago, we obtained, as part of our investigation for *Rolling Stone* magazine, the Republican's list the GOP alleged were the very worst cases of vote and registration fraud by ACORN and similar groups. We went through the names the GOP asserted were "obviously, undeniably and clearly fraudulent" voter registrations.

First, there was Melissa Tais, a dubious ACORN registrant. Her two voter registration forms show, admittedly, suspiciously different signatures. Republicans suggested Melissa was part of a massive fraud to allow Democrats to vote twice.

They were wrong. Ms. Tais, a Cerrillos, New Mexico, waitress, told us she had signed one form on a table and one form holding the paper in her hand. Hence, a second, wobbly signature.

Then there was Patricia White, who Republicans claimed was a fictitious voter. When we filmed her at home in Albuquerque, she seemed real enough.

And so on, through the entire GOP list—not one fraud. And these were their best cases out of the five million "illegal voters" who Republican leaders claim have infiltrated America's voting rolls.

The overblown histrionics about ACORN do not surprise those of us who have been watching the RNC's election manipulation antics. For eight years White House operatives have been trying to gin up press stories about voter fraud. David Iglesias of New Mexico was one of seven U.S. Attorneys fired by the White House for their refusal to bring voter fraud prosecutions. "We took over 100 complaints," from the GOP, he told us, "We investigated for almost 2 years, I didn't find one prosecutable voter fraud case in the entire state of New Mexico."

Iglesias, a McCain supporter, has, for the first time, leveled a new and serious charge: Despite finding none of the 200 voters guilty, he says the White House nevertheless ordered him to illegally prosecute baseless cases against innocent citizens, just to gin up voter fraud publicity. His refusal, he says, cost him his job. "They were looking for politicized—for improperly politicized US attorneys to file bogus voter fraud cases."

Certainly ACORN collected some bad signatures. But despite McCain's claims, now morphed into media theology, none of ACORN's actions will have any impact on any election. ACORN hired 13,000 canvassers to register new voters. A small number of these workers defrauded ACORN by handing in phony registration forms using names they had invented (e.g. Mickey Mouse), or copied from phone books. In one case ACORN canvassers used cigarettes to bribe a homeless man, now a Fox News regular, to register 17 times. None of these activities constituted voter fraud. It is no crime to register 17 times; only the final registration counts. His multiple registrations would not allow the tobacco lover to vote 17 times. Nor is there any evidence the phone book registrants will cast multiple ballots.

Finally, the removal by GOP officials of hundreds of thousands of legitimate voters from voting rolls over the past year provides ACORN with a sound rationale for obtaining new registrations, even from voters who believe they are already registered.

ACORN took pains to screen its registrations and cull out those it considered dubious. However, federal laws make it a felony for voter registration groups like ACORN to discard registrations even when it believes them fraudulent. So ACORN flagged the forms it considered doubtful and handed them in to the registry. Ironically, it was those flagged forms—the fruits of ACORN's diligence—that have been flogged by Republicans as their best evidence of widespread election fraud.

ACORN has served as a good distraction from Republican efforts to steal the vote from hundreds of thousands of legitimate voters, a genuine threat that has received almost no media attention.

Voter fraud is a phantom according to Lorraine Minnite, an expert on voting crime at Columbia University. Only 24 cases of federal voter fraud have been uncovered between 2002 and 2005 despite massive government efforts devoted to uncovering evidence of a voter fraud crime wave.

The GOP is ginning up hysteria about non-existent vote fraud by Democrats in order to distract the press from its own campaign to disenfranchise millions of American voters.

The Republicans have created an obstacle course of barriers designed to suppress the vote, purge tens of thousands of Democratic voters from voting rolls, create mayhem and delay at voting venues on Election Day, and stop millions of votes from being counted this election cycle.

Jailed GOP activist Jack Abramoff and his fellow convict, Congressman Bob Ney, wrote the most sinister provisions of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) which Congress passed in 2002 creating a series of diabolically cunning new voting impediments. HAVA, for example, allows state voting officials to purge tens of thousands of voters from the polls using algorithms and voter ID requirements that disproportionately disenfranchise black, Hispanic and minority voters, and other Democratic demographics including senior citizens and young people.

In 2004, highly organized GOP tacticians helped disenfranchise no less than 2.7 million American voters. Almost a million of them were African Americans. The The Federal Elections Commission has found black voters were nine times more likely to have their votes discarded than white voters and that over one-third of the million provisional ballots cast in 2004—ballots handed disproportionately to African Americans—were never counted but simply thrown into dumpsters.

In a technique known as "caging" RNC operatives send millions of first class letters to black voters across the country marked 'do not forward.' Republican operatives armed with lists then invade black precincts on Election Day to challenge those voters whose letters were returned to the RNC because the voter was not home when the mail arrived. That tactic deliberately targeted black students on vacation in August, homeless men and soldiers posted overseas. "Caging" is resurrecting Old Dixie's Jim Crow procedures designed to rid the lists of black voters and create long lines in black precincts.

In this election, new HAVA mandates permit voting officials to precisely match registration form information with the voter's driver's license and other government records. While it may sound reasonable, in practice, any change, even a dropped hyphen, is cause for eliminating the voter from the rolls. Since 2004, Colorado's Republican Secretaries of State have purged one out of every five voters from the rolls. The current Secretary of State, Mike Coffman, a Republican also running for office, recently purged an additional 37,000 voters and discarded 6,400 new voter registrations—overwhelmingly Democratic—based upon an obscure technical mistake that Coffman's office encouraged voters to make in the first place.

The GOP "anti-fraud" campaign resulted in one in nine New Mexico Democratic voters finding their names had disappeared from voter roles during this year's caucus.

Despite a recent Supreme Court decision upholding Ohio's refusal to disenfranchise 200,000 legitimate voters based on this absurd demand to "match" voter names to databases, White House operatives are still fighting to purge these names from the rolls. President George Bush last week personally asked his Attorney General Mike Mukasey to renew Republican efforts to disenfranchise these voters.

Contrary to Mr. McCain's assertions, the real threat to democracy is from the GOP itself. ACORN has served as a good distraction from Republican efforts to steal the vote from hundreds of thousands of legitimate voters, a genuine threat that has received almost no media attention.

They're stealing your vote, but you can steal it back. Here are some steps you should take to protect your vote. First, avoid the November 4th minefield. Voters, wherever possible, should vote early and in person. Where feasible, avoid mailing in your ballot, many are rejected for flimsy reasons, and first time voters in many states must include a photocopy of ID. However, if you have a mail-in ballot, don't throw it away. Follow directions, use the correct postage (that's an error that cost a hundred thousand votes last time) and, if possible, walk it in to your elections office.

At the polling station, should you find yourself one of the 2.7 million purged, or your ID rejected, then do your best to resist a "provisional" ballot--one third of which are not counted. Return with proper ID, or call 1-866-OUR VOTE for legal assistance. And never just walk away discouraged. That's just what they want you to do.

*Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Greg Palast are authors of an investigation of vote suppression in the current* Rolling Stone*, and a comic book voter guide, "Steal Back Your Vote," both available for download at* StealBackYourVote.org.

**Do not go to the polls on Tuesday, Nov. 4!**

No voting poll-sites will be open in Thurston County on Election Day. Ballots must be taken to drop-off sites or postmarked no later than Nov 4.

Drop-off sites are posted at www.ThurstonVotes.org. Those planning to turn in ballots by US mail should mail as early as possible. Since mail in Thurston County is rerouted through Tacoma on weekdays and Seattle on weekends, postmarks are unpredictable. If you have not yet received a ballot, call the County Auditor's Office.

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